

**Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes**

**FINAL**

**January 4, 2012, 7:30 p.m.**

**Chenery Community Room**

Present: Chair Allison; Members Baghdady, Becker, Brusch, Dash, Epstein, Grob, Libenson, Lynch, Manjikian, McLaughlin, Millane, Sarno; BOS Chair Jones; School Committee Representative Slap

Members Absent: McHugh

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm by Chair Allison.

Chair Allison began by turning to the first item on the agenda.

***Vote on TM Warrant Articles II and VII***

***Article II – Belmont Municipal Light Department Substation***

Chair Allison noted that there are still unresolved calculations that pertain to Article II, therefore the WC will not vote on this article at this time. She said the WC may need to meet prior to TM (from 6-7 on the 18<sup>th</sup>) to vote on this.

***Article VII – TM Ad Hoc Communications Committee Recommendation***

Member Baghdady, a member of this committee, said that an amendment to this article was supposed to have been filed, but he believes it has not yet been filed. He said the time frame was changed to 10 days advance notice of the budget to TM members (from 14) and so perhaps the WC could vote on this on the 18<sup>th</sup> when the amendment is officially filed.

***Reports on Intersection Issues***

Chair Allison noted that this is a new agenda item whereby the BOS, Planning Board and School Committee representatives are given an opportunity to highlight issues that the WC may need to take up in the future. She said it would be useful to hear from these committees on a regular basis.

***a. BOS (Ralph Jones)***

BOS Chair Jones noted that the Board will tackle two reserve fund transfer requests (one from the Fire Department for overtime funding and one from General Government to fund the Town Administrator search) when it meets next on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January.

- ***b. Planning Board (Sami Baghdady)***

- Member Baghdady informed the WC that the PB is developing a solar energy by-law regarding the placement of solar panels. He added that plans for the South Pleasant Street zoning have been advancing. He said he would appreciate WC input to those plans. He also noted that the developer in Cushing Square has filed plans, and hearings would begin in February.

- ***a. School Committee (Laurie Slap)***

- SC Rep. Slap reported that the SC has been focused on the development of the FY13 budget. She said it would be rolled out to the school administration on Friday and rolled out for the WC next Wednesday.

- ***Discussion of Plans for Warrant Briefing, January 12, 2012***

- Chair Allison noted that the WC Briefing will be divided into two parts. Part one (from 7-9) includes a time for TM members to ask questions about the articles that the WC will opine on. Part two (from 9-9:30) of the Briefing will provide an initial high level look at the budget numbers and a discussion of the budget process.

- ***Review of Format for “First Look” Budget Presentation***

- Chair Allison reviewed an FY13 Budget handout with the WC. The WC provided feedback to tweak this handout for the upcoming briefing. Chair Allison noted that the big numbers will be highlighted as well as the gap. She stated four potential suggestions of how to fill the gap which will be identified.

- Members Lynch and Sarno suggested that adding a slide showing how the available revenue estimate is derived would be useful. Chair Allison agreed. Member Bruschi noted that Minuteman is an expense, not a revenue item. Member Libenson clarified that there is the budget (which includes a lot of numbers), and then there is the budget report. He said it was not obvious what the output of the report is.

- Chair Allison addressed a question about compensation that Member Epstein raised.

- Chair Allison explained that the Warrant Briefing ends at 9:00 and the 9:00 – 9:30 portion includes a first look at the budget. The budget, however, will not be discussed at the January TM. TM members, she said, have expressed a desire to have an early look at the budget.

- Regarding compensation, Member Epstein said the take-away is not clear to him. Chair Allison said that this is more of a preview of the topics that the WC report will address. These issues, she added, will not be discussed in detail.

- Member McLaughlin asked about the new health care legislation. BOS Chair Jones replied that the process is in motion and that he hopes he can report on this at the spring TM.

- Member Sarno said that part two of the briefing (9-9:30) will help to make TM members more comfortable about the budget process. Member Epstein said that explaining what the gap means in programmatic terms (potential cuts) will be useful for TM members. The WC agreed it is too soon to discuss the detail of cuts, but that explaining the difference between an available revenue budget and a level service budget would be useful.

- The WC discussed how to make this data available to the public.

### ***Discussion of Plans and Target Dates for 1/11/2012 Budget Submissions***

- Chair Allison distributed a draft of a WC planning calendar for the spring. She highlighted several items including the dates to review the budget on a quarterly basis. She also noted that revenue updates will key off the Governor's budget, Minuteman, and adjustments provided by the Assessor's Office. Chair Allison added that the initial subcommittees reports (due February 15) will include: organization charts, a discussion of full and part-time employees, a look at line-item costs and program costs. The WC discussed if this deadline was a realistic one. Most agreed as an "initial" report, it was doable.

- Chair Allison said that the final draft of the subcommittee report will be due around April 11 (depending on the TM date). She noted that subcommittee time has been built into the schedule about once a month.

### ***Review of Letter to Town Meeting Members***

- Chair Allison noted that the next letter will need to deal with an explanation of the budgets that are due in next week. The letter will be based on what kind of gap is revealed in the budgets. She noted another topic that may be covered in the letter, e.g., the health care trust fund. She said she would like to get the letter out around January 25<sup>th</sup>.

### ***Public Contributions***

- There were none.

### ***Approval of Minutes of December 7 and 14, 2011***

- The minutes of 12/7/2011 and 12/14/2011 were approved with three abstentions for the 12/7/11 set and four abstentions for the 12/14/11 set.

-

- ***Wrap-up/Announcements***

-

- There were none.

-

- ***Adjournment***

-

- Member McLaughlin moved to adjourn at 8:38 pm.

-

-

-

- Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio

- WC Recording Secretary